Ocean & Oaktrees
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Treating Multiple Family Members Policy

Effective date: November 2026
Policy owner: Jennifer Fleming, Clinical Psychologist
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1. Purpose

At Ocean & Oaktrees Clinical Psychology, we recognise that psychological wellbeing is often closely connected to family relationships and experiences.

There may be circumstances where more than one member of a family seeks psychological support from our practice. While this can sometimes be beneficial, it may also create challenges relating to confidentiality, professional boundaries, impartiality and potential conflicts of interest.

This policy explains how we approach requests to provide psychological services to multiple members of the same family, to ensure that every client receives safe, ethical, confidential and independent psychological care.

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2. Our General Approach

Where possible, we recommend that family members seeking individual psychological treatment see different psychologists.

This helps protect each person's privacy, supports an independent therapeutic relationship and reduces the possibility of conflicting professional responsibilities.

There may, however, be circumstances where treating multiple family members is clinically appropriate and beneficial.

Any decision to provide services to more than one family member will be made following careful consideration of the individual circumstances, relevant ethical obligations and the best interests of those involved.

Being related to an existing client does not automatically prevent someone from accessing our services. However, the psychologist retains professional responsibility for determining whether providing treatment to multiple family members is ethically and clinically appropriate.

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3. Factors We Consider

Before agreeing to provide individual psychological services to multiple members of the same family, we consider:

Confidentiality and trust

Whether each person can feel confident that their private information will remain confidential and that they can speak openly without concerns about information being shared with other family members.

Professional impartiality

Whether the psychologist can maintain independence, objectivity and therapeutic neutrality when working with individuals who may have different perspectives, experiences or interests.

Conflicts of interest

Whether providing treatment to one family member could interfere with the psychologist's professional responsibilities to another, or create an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Power differences and family dynamics

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Whether differences in age, authority, dependence or influence within the family may affect an individual's freedom to participate in treatment or make independent decisions.

Potential therapeutic benefits and risks

Whether treating multiple family members is likely to support positive therapeutic outcomes or could unintentionally harm an existing therapeutic relationship.

Information obtained during treatment

Whether the psychologist can appropriately manage information obtained from one family member that may be relevant to another person's treatment but cannot be shared without consent or another lawful basis.

Family conflict and relationship changes

Whether existing or potential relationship difficulties, including separation, family violence, parenting disputes or legal proceedings, could compromise the psychologist's ability to provide safe and impartial care.

Where these considerations raise significant ethical or clinical concerns, the psychologist may recommend that

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one or more family members seek support from another practitioner.

4. Confidentiality and Privacy

Every client is entitled to privacy and confidentiality, regardless of their relationship to another person receiving treatment.

When multiple family members are seen individually:

- Each person has their own confidential clinical record.
- Information disclosed by one client will not ordinarily be shared with another family member without appropriate consent or another lawful basis.
- The psychologist will not confirm or discuss another family member's treatment, attendance, disclosures or progress without appropriate authorisation.
- Information obtained during one person's therapy will not automatically be used in another person's treatment.
- Confidentiality may be limited where disclosure is required or authorised by law, or otherwise permitted

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under applicable professional and privacy obligations.

Consent to treatment does not constitute consent to share information between family members.

Where sharing information may be therapeutically beneficial, the psychologist will discuss the purpose, scope and implications of the proposed disclosure and seek appropriate consent.

We acknowledge that confidentiality may be more complex when multiple family members receive services from the same psychologist. These limitations and foreseeable risks will be discussed before treatment proceeds.

5. Informed Consent and Freedom of Choice

Where treatment of multiple family members is being considered, the psychologist will explain any reasonably foreseeable risks, limitations and potential conflicts of interest.

Clients will have the opportunity to ask questions and consider whether they are comfortable proceeding.

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Where appropriate, informed consent will be obtained and documented before treatment commences or the arrangement changes.

Consent must be freely given.

No family member will be pressured, coerced or required to accept a shared treating psychologist as a condition of receiving psychological care.

Clients may raise concerns or withdraw consent to treatment at any time. Where this occurs, the psychologist will discuss the implications and appropriate options for ongoing care.

Client consent does not, by itself, resolve an ethical conflict or require a psychologist to enter into or continue a treatment arrangement considered inappropriate.

6. Children, Adolescents and Families

Additional considerations apply when providing psychological services to children, adolescents and their parents or caregivers.

These include:

- The child's developmental capacity, maturity and ability to provide informed consent.

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- The legal authority of parents, guardians or other authorised decision-makers.
- The child's right to age-appropriate privacy and confidentiality.
- The potential impact of family relationships and power differences on the child's psychological wellbeing.
- The psychologist's ability to maintain impartiality where parental interests differ from those of the child.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to support their child's therapeutic engagement while respecting appropriate confidentiality boundaries.

A parent's involvement in arranging or paying for treatment does not automatically provide unrestricted access to the child's clinical information.

The psychologist will explain how consent, parental involvement and confidentiality will be managed, considering the child's circumstances and applicable legal requirements.

Where parental conflict, separation, family violence or other concerns may compromise the therapeutic

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relationship, the psychologist may recommend an alternative practitioner.

7. Family, Couples and Joint Sessions

Individual psychological therapy is distinct from couples therapy, family therapy and other forms of joint intervention.

Where more than one family member participates in a session, the psychologist will clarify:

- Who is receiving the psychological service.
- The purpose of the session and the psychologist's professional role.
- How information shared during the session will be managed.
- Any limitations to confidentiality.
- Whether information from the session may form part of a client's clinical record.

Participating in another person's therapy does not automatically establish a separate therapeutic relationship with the psychologist.

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A psychologist providing individual treatment may decline requests to provide couples or family therapy where doing so would create conflicting responsibilities or compromise professional impartiality.

8. Separation, Legal Disputes and Reports

Particular care is required where family members are experiencing relationship breakdown, parenting disputes, family violence or legal proceedings.

The role of a treating psychologist is to provide psychological assessment and treatment, rather than to independently investigate disputed events or determine the credibility, parenting capacity or legal rights of family members.

Treatment does not automatically establish a professional basis for providing an independent forensic opinion.

Where reports, court documents or professional opinions are requested, the psychologist will consider the purpose, available evidence, informed consent, confidentiality obligations and any potential conflicts of interest.

The psychologist may decline requests that fall outside their professional role or compromise their therapeutic responsibilities.

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Where independent assessment is required, referral to an appropriately qualified external practitioner may be recommended.

9. Managing Emerging Conflicts of Interest

Circumstances and family relationships can change over time.

A treatment arrangement that was initially considered appropriate may become unsuitable if new information, relationship difficulties or competing therapeutic needs arise.

We will continue to monitor potential conflicts of interest throughout treatment.

If concerns arise, the psychologist may:

- Discuss the concerns and relevant implications with the affected client or clients, while maintaining confidentiality.
- Seek appropriate professional consultation or supervision.
- Review consent, boundaries and treatment arrangements.

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- Recommend modification of the therapeutic approach.
- Arrange referral to an independent psychologist where appropriate.

Where continuing treatment would compromise ethical or professional obligations, the psychologist may need to discontinue one or more therapeutic arrangements.

Any changes will be managed with consideration for client wellbeing, continuity of care and appropriate referral pathways.

10. Our Commitment to Ethical Practice

Ocean & Oaktrees Clinical Psychology is committed to providing psychological care that is ethical, respectful, evidence-based and responsive to each client's individual circumstances.

Our approach is guided by the Psychology Board of Australia's *Code of Conduct for Psychologists*, including requirements relating to informed consent, confidentiality, professional boundaries, multiple relationships and conflicts of interest.

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Our priority is to protect the wellbeing, dignity, privacy and therapeutic interests of every client.

We recognise that each family is unique. Decisions regarding the treatment of multiple family members will therefore be made individually, with transparency, professional judgement and respect for the people involved.

11. Questions or Concerns

If you have questions about this policy, or would like to discuss the implications of a family member attending treatment at our practice, please contact us.

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This policy should be read alongside our Privacy Policy, Informed Consent documentation and other relevant practice policies.